

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Imagine with me for a moment. A father is finally coming home after a long business trip, eager to reunite with his wife and children. The family is supposed to be waiting at the airport, but when the plane lands, there is no message from his wife or children indicating they are there waiting. No problem. They must be waiting outside security, so he sends a group message, “Just landed. See you soon. Can’t wait!”

When he gets to security, they are nowhere in sight. With a deep sigh and bowed head, he shuffles off to baggage claim. “They must not have been able to find a parking spot,” he tells himself, “and are circling the terminal drive.” So he sends a quick message, “Waiting on bags. Be out soon.” After the conveyor brings his luggage, he pushes through the crowd, making his way out the doors and to the curb.

He scans the cars along the curb and peers at the oncoming traffic. He pulls out his phone and calls his wife. No answer. He hangs up and calls his son. No answer. He calls his other son. No answer. His daughter. No answer. He tries his wife again. No answer. He’s starting to become concerned and decides to get an Uber home. On the way, he calls friends and family. His heart is thumping. Not one of them know anything. His wife and kids still aren’t picking up or responding. His heart is pounding. Finally, he gets ahold of a neighbor. It appears they are all home. He sits back in his seat and breaths a deep sigh.

The Uber finally pulls up to his curb. He collects his belongings. The lights are all on in the house. He notices an extra car in the driveway. He walks into the garage and through the kitchen door. There sits his daughter eating a snack and texting. He clears his throat. She glances up and says, “Oh, hi, dad.” Then picks up her phone and disappears. Out the sliding door, he can see his oldest son lying in a hammock with his girlfriend, laughing and talking as they watch videos on their phones.

He slowly shakes his head and starts dragging himself toward his bedroom. As he passes the living room where he finds his other son on the couch playing video games. Mouth agape, he shakes his head. His son notices him standing there and says, “When did you get home?” Wordlessly he turns and heads toward the bedroom. He opens the door, and there, tucked in bed, is his wife with a glass of wine, wearing a bathrobe, texting with friends, and watching Netflix.

What do you suppose that man would be thinking and feeling at that moment? The disappointment. The heartache. Who would want that kind of family? Inattentive, without a care or concern for husband and father?

And yet...this is the very concern of Jesus. *“As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”* Jesus is nearing the end of His earthly ministry. He has already taught the disciples of His impending death and resurrection. He has wept over the coming destruction of Jerusalem for their refusal to receive Him as their Messiah. And His disciples, in response, make a curious connection. They seem to believe that when Jerusalem is destroyed, Jesus will come into His End Time reign and subdue all things under His feet. And so they lump them together and ask, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

But Jesus patiently corrects their understanding. First, He teaches them to watch the signs to understand the times. He tells them of all that mark the birth pangs of His coming: false prophets leading many astray, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes. But these do not bring the end of the age. They are only reminders that the end *is* coming. Then He answers their first question, concerning the judgment of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. When the abomination of desolation appears in the temple, the time has come to flee Jerusalem. And so they did. Historians record that no Christian was left in Jerusalem when Babylon sacked it.

But concerning *that* day and *that* hour, the time of Christ’s coming, no one knows. In His humility, not even the Son knows, only the Father. And what Jesus is concerned about is that in that intervening time, His family, the Church, will grow inattentive, without care or concern for Him or His return. A lukewarmness will settle over them. *“As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”*

You remember the story from Genesis 6. *“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on earth.”* Except here, Jesus doesn’t concern Himself with corruption. He has a completely different point to make. *“For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the*

*coming of the Son of Man.*” In other words, they were going about their day, blissfully ignorant of God’s coming wrath.

But that’s the point...they shouldn’t have been. They had God’s Word passed down from Adam and Eve. And Noah only missed Adam by about 100 years, which wasn’t much considering that at that time, they were living for seven, eight, nine hundred years. They had Noah’s preaching concerning the coming judgment of God’s wrath. They had the ark itself to testify. There is no reason whatsoever that when the fountains of the deep burst open and the rain began to pound that they were caught off guard. But they were, and they paid the price for being inattentive and unconcerned with God’s Word. They paid for it with their lives.

And Jesus warns that His return will be just as sudden. There will be two men working side by side in the field, one will be taken and one left. Two women at the mill, one taken and one left. Taken where? As in the days of Noah, they will be swept away in God’s wrath and judgment. But even though we do not know the day or hour, Christ’s return should not take us by surprise. We should not go on with our day-to-day life without care or concern for Jesus and His return.

Stay awake, Jesus says. Be ready. For we do not know on what day our Lord is coming. For the Son of Man is coming at an hour we do not expect. But how do we do that? How do we stay awake and be ready? Do we sit at an airport somewhere, waiting for His flight to land? Of course not. Nor do we go out and keep our eyes glued to the skies, inattentive and unconcerned about our day-to-day lives. Day-to-day life is not what Jesus warns against. After all, He says that two men will be out in the field working, two women at the mill grinding. He is the one who has given us this work to do.

What He is concerned about, however, is that while we go about our day-to-day lives, we will live as the people in Noah’s day, completely unaware of the coming Judgement. Instead, He desires us to live ever aware that He will return and could return at any moment. And that awareness affects how we live.

If we knew our father was returning home from a long business trip at any moment, but didn’t know when, we would live in anticipation and preparation. Maybe we’d always have the car filled with gas, ready to pick him up. And make sure the house was warm and welcoming to receive him. We would ensure that we’d keep up with the chores and that there was always food at home so that we wouldn’t have to go buy groceries after he arrived.

But what if we know that Jesus will return at any moment? What do we do then? Well, we consider what He has done for us and what He has taught. We know that He bled and died to redeem us for Himself and has given us new life in the Holy Spirit. In this new life, He gives us an awareness of our sins and the ability to repent. He empowers us to see our temptations and provides us with a way of escape. He continually teaches us more about Himself and this life that He gives through His Word, so we would regularly be found in it. And we would ensure that we are not being led astray by those who call themselves Christians but teach falsely, or even those who are Christians but teach some things contrary to what Jesus teaches in His Word. We would teach others the truth. We would also regularly gather with the family to eat the meal He has provided to sustain us as we await His return and to pray to the Father to help us and send His Son soon.

For Jesus will soon return at an hour that we do not expect. May we, therefore, with all the saints, stay awake and be ready for His return.